

American

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Technology Opens Doors for Women, Secretary Clinton Says	1
U.S.-China Panel Aims to Improve Trade Opportunities	1
U.S. Grant Program Aims to Reduce Poverty in Philippines	2

Technology Opens Doors for Women, Secretary Clinton Says

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is celebrating her department's TechWomen exchange program, which uses technology to open doors that are otherwise closed to women in the Middle East and North Africa.

"Being a woman in the field of technology is not always easy," Clinton said at the State Department during a July 6 gathering for the TechWomen initiative. "But there are so many opportunities in technology that we just have to forge ahead, and we're doing so around the world because we want to make sure that all the tools that technology has made available are just as open to women as they are to men."

TechWomen, funded by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is a public-private partnership that pairs women from top technology companies in California's Silicon Valley with women emerging as leaders in technical fields across the Middle East and North Africa for a professional mentorship and exchange program.

According to its website, TechWomen "fosters and develops the next generation of women leaders in the technology field by providing women and girls with the access and opportunity needed to pursue tech-based careers."

The program began in May with 38 women from the region who came to the United States to spend five weeks working with their American mentors. The State Department July 6 event concluded the U.S. portion of the exchange. The American participants are scheduled to visit their counterparts later in 2011.

The 21st century is "the time when women and girls should be fully embraced to be given their universal human rights, no matter who they are or where they live," Clinton said, adding that the Internet has "so much potential for unleashing the creativity and building the opportunity that is at the root of any successful society and that should be available to every person."

The secretary called on program participants to take what they have learned through TechWomen and pass it on to other women and girls in their home countries. She stressed the importance of technology in "enhancing relationships, building businesses and creating greater opportunities."

Clinton also announced a new program, TechGirls,

scheduled to be launched in 2012 as a complement to the TechWomen program. TechGirls aims to bring teenage girls from across the Middle East and North Africa to the United States for "an intensive month of educational activities," Clinton said.

U.S.-China Panel Aims to Improve Trade Opportunities

Washington — Representatives of the United States and China explored trade issues and open-market opportunities to help both countries grow sustainably at a recent meeting in Washington.

The midyear review of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT), held June 28, allowed the nations to analyze their trade and investment relationship, identify key policy concerns and prepare for the 2011 JCCT plenary meeting hosted by China later this year, the Department of Commerce announced.

During the meeting, senior U.S. trade officials encouraged China to open more markets to American goods and services and make progress on other priority trade issues, while China sought to enhance mutual trust.

Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Francisco Sánchez and Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Claire Reade co-chaired the meeting with Chinese Vice Minister of Commerce Wang Chao.

The JCCT, established in 1983, is the main forum for addressing bilateral trade issues and promoting commercial opportunities between the United States and China. The annual high-level meeting is an opportunity for the U.S. and Chinese governments to address trade issues and promote commercial relations.

"We are focused on creating a balanced and healthy U.S.-China trade relationship and we believe China should take steps to open more markets to American goods and services," Sánchez said in a statement released June 28. He added that there are many challenges that need to be addressed in the U.S.-China commercial relationship, but there are important synergies that exist between the countries' initiatives to develop their economies.

Reade said, "The JCCT midyear review is a key opportunity to focus on full implementation of last year's JCCT commitments and to energize the work towards a productive 2011 JCCT plenary."

Past JCCT meetings have made progress in several trade issues to help both the United States and China achieve balanced and sustainable growth. Successes from the 2010 forum included enforcement of intellectual property rights, open and neutral technology standards, clean

energy, and transparency in the Chinese smart grid market and government procurement. The JCCT also provides education for Chinese interested in investment in the United States.

In 2010, China was the United States' third-largest export market. It remains a critical destination for American manufactured goods and services. U.S. senior officials added that the relationship between the United States and China creates connections and benefits for farmers, workers and consumers in both countries.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is responsible for developing and coordinating U.S. international trade and overseeing negotiations with other countries. The agency works under the premise that trade expansion is critical to fueling economic growth, supporting good jobs, encouraging investment, raising living standards and creating affordable goods and services worldwide.

U.S. Grant Program Aims to Reduce Poverty in Philippines

Washington — The United States supports efforts to reduce poverty through economic growth in the Philippines with a grant agreement to help fund major development projects.

In 2010, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) signed a five-year, \$434 million compact with the Republic of the Philippines to support three major projects that demonstrate the joint commitment of the U.S. and Philippine governments to fight poverty in the Philippines.

MCC, an independent U.S. foreign aid corporation, works with countries committed to good governance, economic freedom and investment in their citizens. Eligible countries qualify for grants from the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) to fund specific programs targeted at reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth.

Daniel Yohannes, chief executive officer of MCC, met with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert F. Del Rosario and Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia Jr. on June 23 to discuss the progress of the compact, according to an MCC press release.

"I commend the MCA-Philippines team and the government of the Republic of the Philippines on achieving 'entry into force' of the compact ahead of schedule," Yohannes said at the meeting. "I look forward to meeting future implementation challenges head-on and achieving the goals of the compact over the next five years." He also highlighted the Aquino administration's

efforts to support the nation's development plan and fight corruption.

The MCA compact with the Philippines aims to support reforms and investments to modernize the Bureau of Internal Revenue, expand and improve a community-driven development project, and rehabilitate a secondary national road in Samar province. The Philippines compact intends to improve lives in rural areas by targeting poverty-stricken communities for small-scale development projects, increasing community participation in development and governance activities, and improving responsiveness of local government to community needs.

Del Rosario expressed the Philippine government's appreciation for MCC's strong support of the compact. "We are committed to see this program through in the next five years as an enduring legacy that will further enhance our partnership," he said.

During the meeting, Yohannes called on the Philippine government to continue to monitor critical items throughout the term of the compact and encouraged President Benigno Aquino's administration to increase efforts to combat human trafficking and address human rights abuses.

The MCC was founded on the premise that aid is most effective when it helps countries achieve their own development objectives within a framework of sound political, economic and social policies. To date, the corporation has approved \$7 billion in foreign assistance.

The MCA compact with the Philippines is expected to boost Filipino incomes, particularly those of the poor, and overall economic growth. The Philippine government predicts the projects within the compact will benefit more than 5 million people by 2030.

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